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### Grizzlies in third straight Big Sky postseason tourney

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## GRIZZLIES IN THIRD STRAIGHT BIG SKY POSTSEASON TOURNEY

guffey/stc  
state, weeklies  
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by DAVE GUFFEY  
UM Sports Information Director

MISSOULA--

Big Sky Conference basketball fans are getting used to seeing the University of Montana basketball team in postseason action. This weekend, Feb. 29 - March 1, fans in Ogden, Utah will be able to see the Grizzlies once again, as UM plays the University of Idaho at 9 p.m.

This will be the third straight postseason Big Sky tournament for Montana, which finished 16-10 overall and 8-6 in the conference, good for a third-place finish in the regular season. The Grizzlies' finish was especially impressive considering they had to defeat (85-78) rival Montana State in Bozeman to place third.

Weber State, ranked 16th nationally and sporting a 24-2 record (13-1 in conference), will host Montana State (14-11, 7-7) at 7 p.m. in the first game Friday in Weber's Dee Events Center. Idaho is 17-9 overall and 9-5 in the Big Sky.

The big story for the Grizzlies this season has been four road breakthroughs, including three in the conference. Last year UM was 0-7 on the road in the Big Sky, compared to 3-4 in 1979-80.

"We have really been ready to play on the road, both physically and mentally," said second-year coach Mike Montgomery. "The players have confidence in themselves, and know they can win on the road. The win at San Jose (74-72 in overtime) really gave them a boost."

Montana was picked to finish anywhere from third to seventh by preseason publications. The Big Sky media tabbed them sixth. UM lost both starting forwards from last season, but two-time all-conference center John Stroeder (6-10) was back, as were starting guards Craig Zanon (6-6) and Blaine Taylor (6-1½).

(over)



## GRIZZLIES IN THIRD STRAIGHT--add one

Zanon has been the Grizzlies' steadiest scorer, averaging 15.2 a game, and leading the team in that category in more than half of their games. He has been the Big Sky Player of the Week twice this season. Zanon, a junior from Kalispell, was also named to the Las Vegas-hosted Rebel Roundup all-tourney team.

Taylor, a junior from Missoula, has dished out 100 assists thus far this season, and ranks among the conference leaders in that category. He scored a game-high 22 points against MSU recently, and a season's high 24 points in a win over Portland State.

Stroeder has moved to No. 10 on the Grizzlies' all-time scoring list with 917 points, and needs only 11 more to take over the 9th spot of Ben DeMers (1973-77). He also ranks among the career leaders in rebounds with 572.

Taylor and Zanon are shooting extremely well from the free-throw line, averaging 83.5 and 82.4 percent, respectively. Stroeder leads the team in field goal percentage (51.2) and has shot more than 50 percent from the floor the last three seasons.

Juniors Marty Green (6-9) and Rod Brandon (6-6) round out the starting five. Green is from Missoula, while Brandon hails from Norwalk, Calif. Green is averaging 7.4 and 5.4.

Depth is improved this year with the addition of freshman Derrick Pope (6-6), forward Tim Knight (6-7) and senior Tim McCauley (6-1½). Knight led UM in its season opener with 21 points, Pope hauled down 10 rebounds in the conference opener, and McCauley's steady ball-handling has accounted for only 23 turnovers in 26 games. He scored a career-high 17 points against Portland State.

As usual, Montana leads the Big Sky in defense, allowing only 63.3 points a game. The Grizzlies have led the conference in defense the last eight consecutive years. The Grizzlies finished ranked fourth in defense last season, as well as setting a conference record (60.3).

Coach Montgomery, who has led his team to the playoffs in both his seasons as head coach, must feel pretty good about the future Grizzly basketball program--Stroeder and McCauley are the only seniors on the 1979-80 squad.